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THE
VALLEY OF THE RIO GRANDE:
ITS TOPOGRAPHY AND
RESOURCES.

BY

JOHN AUSTIN STEVENS, JR.



FOR SALE BY SINCLAIR TOUSEY,

121 Nassau Street.



NEW YORK:

WM. C. BRYANT & CO., PRINTERS, 41 NASSAU ST., COR. LIBERTY.

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THIS sketch of the *Topography, Resources, and Trade of the Valley of the Rio Grande*, was originally published in the *New York Tribune* of the 8th of December, under the title of the "REOCCUPATION OF THE RIO GRANDE," and was intended to attract public attention to this fertile region, which, in view of the French movements in Southern and Central Mexico, presents a field of peculiar interest to the United States at this time. At the request of numerous gentlemen interested in the subject of our Mexican trade and relations, the original article has been much enlarged and placed in a more tangible form; all the facts stated are from reliable authorities, and mostly derived from official sources.

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# THE VALLEY OF THE RIO GRANDE.

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The landing of a United States force at the mouth of the Rio Grande, and the occupation of the important positions of Point Isabel and Brownsville, after an abandonment of nearly three years, form an era in the history of the war. The movement is of the gravest importance, whether considered in its relation to the Rebellion itself, to the changed condition of Mexico, or to the possible embarrassments which may result from it in the conduct of our diplomatic relations with France. We propose chiefly to consider the character and importance of the country which we have reoccupied, and its relation to the Northeastern States of Mexico.

## THE VALLEY OF THE RIO GRANDE.

Prior to the settlement of the country by the Spaniards, in the year 1780, this fertile valley was the home of the native Indian, who, with his simple tastes, found an easy and grateful support in the tropical fruits, which flourished in great abundance on the fruitful river margins.

As usual in all occupations of territory by the Spaniards, with their mixed theocratic and military rule, the

priest went side by side with the soldiery ; and when the restless spirit of the man-at-arms led him to seek new fields of adventure and conquest, the more educated and practical mind and settled purpose of the soldier of God, caused him to remain behind to enjoy the fruits of his labors, and to civilize and educate the savage to a new culture and a new faith. The priest found his worldly account in this, and from the labor of the native obtained a rich return for his pastoral care. Missions were quickly established, and the natives were employed in the herding of cattle and the raising of corn. The stock increased with amazing rapidity, and at the time of the Mexican War of Independence, the whole broad belt of prairie land from the Rio Grande to the Nueces, now a part of Texas, was filled with vast herds of cattle and sheep ; and horses, also, roamed over this fertile pasturage almost unchecked of man.

In 1821, the Mexicans ventured to throw off the yoke of Spain, and a plan of national independence was declared at Iguala. General Iturbide declared himself Emperor soon afterwards. This was the first in a series of pronunciamientos, reactions, and revolutions, which have arrested the progress and checked the growth of this magnificent country ; but it is only just to observe that all the struggles have sprung from the stern resolve of the Mexicans not to submit in peace or quiet to the yoke of the stranger, to the absolute rule which priest and captain alike sought to impose.

With the declaration of war came the withdrawal of the Spanish troops from the border, and the abandonment



of the Mission establishments. The Indians soon relapsed into their savage state, and sought to exterminate the stranger. Padre BALLI, one of the leading priests, withdrew with his stock to an island on the coast, which has ever since borne the name of PADRE ISLAND, in honor of his residence. It is stated, as an instance of the rapid increase of stock, that about 1840, the island was literally covered by it; a few years later, one of those inundations to which the Gulf coast is at times subject, and which cover all the coast except the high bluffs of POINT ISABEL, swept the island, and destroyed all the cattle. A part of the inhabitants took refuge on Point Isabel, and were saved. It was at the same period that the little town of BRAZOS SAINT JAGO, on the island of BRAZOS, which skirts the coast south of and opposite to Padre Island, was also destroyed.

As late as 1838, a traveler reports that "large herds of wild cattle were to be seen ranging on the luxuriant pasturage of the wide-spread and unsettled prairies of Southwestern Texas." During the Texan struggle for independence, repeated forays into the debatable territory, swept off large portions of this stock to the eastern portions of the State, and it is now scarcely to be met with on the border.

Yet this pasturage is a proved element of the wealth of the country, and stock may be rapidly increased, to the great profit of the settler. It is estimated that the annual yield is not less than  $33\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. gross, or 25 per cent. nett, deducting deaths. The cost of raising beeves five years old, is about three dollars; of horses

and mules, \$10 *a* \$12 the head. At the time of annexation, 1845, the stock-raiser thought himself well paid at \$4 *a* \$5 per head for stock cattle, and \$8 *a* \$10 for fat beeves; but the increase of trade with the Northern States, had carried prices, in 1860, to \$20 the head for good beeves.

#### THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE GULF COAST.

The water on the whole of the Gulf Coast from New Orleans to Tampico, is extremely shallow, and affords but few even passable harbors—none of the first-class. From New Orleans to Aransas Pass we find those of Sabine, Galveston, and Passo Cavallo, the entrance to Matagorda Bay. From Aransas Pass to Tampico, a distance of 400 miles, the only harbor of any kind is that of Brazos Santiago, or Point Isabel. At the mouth of the Rio Grande there is no harbor worthy of the name. The water on the bar varies from two and a half to six feet in depth—never exceeding the latter, and rarely over four feet. Sailing vessels can only cross it in tow of steamers. During the season of northers, it is extremely hazardous for vessels even to lay off the bar. This bar, on account of its uncertain and shifting character, can hardly be improved, being formed by inundations from the sea, and not from the deposits of the river.

BRAZOS SANTIAGO THE HARBOR OF MATAMOROS AND  
BROWNSVILLE.

Except to those who have made a careful study of the topography of the Rio Grande country, or those who have had a direct interest in that quarter, it may not be generally known that Matamoros and Brownsville, which face each other from the Mexican and United States banks of the great river, are at a considerable distance by the river from its mouth. The course of the river as it nears the sea is extremely tortuous, and the two towns, which are not more than twenty miles from the Boca del Rio, or mouth of the river, by an air-line, and thirty-six miles by the river road, which leads by short cuts across the larger bends, are seventy miles distant from the mouth by the course of the stream.

Owing to this in part, but chiefly to the dangerous nature of the Rio Grande bar, the harbor of Brazos Santiago, nine miles north of the mouth of the Rio Grande, is practically the harbor of Matamoros and Brownsville, and the point by which all the exports and imports of the fertile valley of the Rio Grande, including the States of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Nuevo Leon, with their rich mineral wealth, must pass. As has been remarked, Tampico is the nearest Mexican harbor, and is distant 240 miles, at the most southern point of Tamaulipas. The entrance to the harbor of Brazos Santiago is between Padre Island to the north and Brazos Island to the south. The bar at all times affords a sufficient depth of water for vessels drawing eight, and frequently for those drawing

nine feet. The United States Engineer charged with the survey of this point in 1854 reported that by a regular system of dredging, similar to that in use at the mouth of the Mississippi, twelve feet could be kept at all times. The bar itself is a ridge of loose sand. To the northwest from the pass is Point Isabel, a bluff about twenty-six feet above high water-mark, on which, as the only place secure from the overflow, are built the light-house, the custom-house, the wharves, and warehouses. Previous to the American occupation of the country, Point Isabel was the port of entry for Matamoros, and the Mexican Custom-House was here stationed; since the Mexican war the greater part of the foreign trade of the upper and lower valley of the Rio Grande has been carried on through this point.

From Point Isabel to Brownsville the distance is shorter than by the river road from the mouth of the Rio Grande, not exceeding twenty-six miles by the road and twenty by air-line.

The harbor is safe except in the most violent northers, and although vessels drawing above six feet cannot run up to the wharves at Point Isabel, yet such are the dangers of the bar at other points, and so much greater the cost of lighterage, that this is the most secure and economical method of carrying on the trade. That this was recognized to be the case is evident from the fact that a company was formed, and subscription-books were about to be opened, to build a railroad from Monterey, Nuevo Leon, to Matamoros, and from Brownsville to Point Isabel, when secession, in 1861, broke up the scheme.

## IMPORTANCE OF POINT ISABEL.

These particulars are entered into to show the great importance to the United States, as well as to Mexico, of our holding securely this valuable point. It has already been shown that it is the only harbor on the coast for 400 miles, and, whatever power shall hold it, will inevitably control the trade not only of the Rio Grande Valley, but of a large part of Northern Mexico. It seems, therefore, clearly the policy of the Government immediately to establish defensive works and store-houses at this point, and to take a permanent possession, never again to be surrendered or left to the chances of rebellion at home or invasion from abroad. There are at present no such defenses. During the Mexican War a depot was established here by General Taylor, and this site selected as a base of operations for his campaign. A mud fort—Fort Polk—was thrown up, the remains of which exist. A powerful and permanent casemated work should be erected, and light draught gun-boats be permanently stationed in the harbor. Fort Brown, which commands both Brownsville and Matamoros opposite, should be restored and armed, and a railroad at once built to connect Brownsville and Point Isabel. The triangle thus formed by the gulf, the river, and the road between these two points would form an admirable position for defense. The short line between the two forts protected by them, and with the water on both flanks, would prove impregnable against a large force.



## BROWNSVILLE—MATAMOROS.

These ports practically depend on the harbor of Brazos for the greater part of their commerce. Two-thirds of all the commerce of Matamoros have, until recently, been under the American flag. Both are flourishing places. In 1841 the extent of the trade of Matamoros with the United States reached the sum of \$4,600,000, of which \$2,000,000 were inward and \$2,200,000 outward cargoes, including \$1,800,000 in specie and \$400,000 in hides. Its imports are chiefly breadstuffs, spices, provisions, cloths; its exports, specie, hides, and wool. As the mining districts are further developed, there will be a large demand for machinery of all kinds. Since the Mexican war, the trade has much increased, and that of Brownsville alone was estimated in 1861 at \$8,000,000.

Since the rebellion began, an immense contraband trade has been done, reaching millions in amount, and keeping always employed a large number of vessels. There have been at all times on the coast, awaiting cargoes, from 60 to 70 vessels. The recent expedition of Gen. Banks found 26 sail, and this in unfavorable weather—the export has been chiefly cotton. This cotton, grown 350 miles up the coast, in the heart of Texas, has been dragged by wagons this great distance; cotton, wagons, horses, teamsters, all being conscripted by the rebel military authorities to carry on this absolutely necessary trade to the Confederacy.

By this trade Matamoros had become one of the lead-

ing ports on this continent. It is estimated that from 150,000 to 200,000 bales of cotton, a value approximating to \$100,000,000, have found shipment from this point; 20,000 bales are reported to have been found there by Gen. Banks. The imports were of every kind of supply which could help the rebels in arms. With the stoppage of this contraband trade, Matamoros will, of course, relapse to her former position, neither these exports nor imports being for her own account—the fruit of the industry, or the measure of the wants of the Mexican country which she supplies.

#### THE MEXICAN TRADE AND THE FRENCH BLOCKADE.

The commerce of the Rio Grande valley, and of the northeastern States of Mexico, is of importance to the United States, although a considerable portion has been under English control. The blockade of the lower coast established by France will, if immediate steps be taken by our Government and enterprising citizens, throw the whole of this valuable trade into our hands. The proclamation of the Emperor Napoleon, declaring the blockade, exempted, it will be remembered, all points within ten leagues of the Rio Grande (though recent vessels state that the blockade is effective to within nine miles of the river), and it has been argued that the Emperor made this exemption for the double purpose of enabling the revolutionary party, acting in the interest of France, to overthrow the Juarez Government in the Province of Tamaulipas, and

of facilitating the contraband trade between the rebels and foreign powers. There is nothing in the facts to bear out this assertion. It is not shown that the French have participated in or profited by such contraband trade, and it is not probable that a Government like that of France; itself interested in maintaining the law of blockade, would, to its own manifest disadvantage, and in the interest of English speculators and of the rebels alone, have adopted such a policy; nor is there anything in the course of France, during the rebellion, which shows the slightest desire on her part to contribute to its success—certainly no act of the Government or citizens has shown such desire. On the contrary, her course, though not always an agreeable or palatable one to the United States, has been marked by a perfect good faith. Undoubtedly, the Emperor would have been gratified had the Provinces of Tamaulipas, Coahuila, and Nuevo Leon, declared in favor of the new order which he seeks to establish, and his agents have probably been active to this end, as seems to be shown by the recent news from Matamoros, but it is not apparent how a failure to blockade the coast would conduce to this result. On the contrary, it would seem that such course would enable the Mexicans to obtain arms and munitions of war to defeat such schemes. But the truth lies in quite a different direction. The blockade was not declared over this coast, because, between Tampico, at the southern extremity of Tamaulipas and the Rio Grande, there are no harbors to blockade—no custom-houses or ports of entry to close. Matamoros itself is 70 miles up the river, and the mouth



of the Rio Grande could not very well be blockaded, because in part United States waters, and, what is of equal importance, not worth blockading—Brazos Santiago being, as we have shown, the only harbor and port on the coast for 400 miles, and in United States territory.

The effect of the French blockade of Tampico, and the occupation of Point Isabel and the Brazos by the United States, will be, therefore, to place the whole trade of Northern and of much of Interior Mexico within the control of the United States.

#### EXTENT OF MEXICAN TRADE.

Carlos Butterfield, in his valuable work on the Commerce, Trade, and Statistics of Mexico, which was published in 1861, states the total annual value of foreign imports into the Republic of Mexico at \$26,000,000, of foreign exports at \$28,000,000—total, \$54,000,000, distributed as follows:

| TO AND FROM        |              | TO AND FROM        |                    |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| England.....       | \$33,400,000 | Guatamala, Ecua-   |                    |
| U. States, 1858... | 8,700,000    | dor, New Grana-    |                    |
| France.....        | 5,500,000    | da, Venezuela,     |                    |
| Germany.....       | 2,000,000    | Chili.....         | \$500,000          |
| Spain.....         | 1,200,000    | Island of Cuba.... | 1,200,000          |
| Belgium.....       | 400,000      | India and China..  | 1,000,000          |
| Sardinia.....      | 100,000      |                    |                    |
| Total.....         |              |                    | <hr/> \$54,000,000 |

In 1835, the commercial exchanges between Mexico

and the United States, were above \$20,000,000 ; in 1858, they had dwindled to below \$8,000,000. Thus has our trade with this our next-door neighbor, declined, while that of England has steadily increased.

The cause of this may be mainly ascribed to the wise policy of Great Britain and the indifference of our own Government, and especially to the large and liberal manner in which regular mail lines, affording constant and safe communication for merchants, conveyance for passengers, and *freight for specie*, a large export of Mexico, have been established and maintained by the subsidies of the British Government.

The export of silver from Mexico amounts annually to \$23,000,000 ; her other exports to only \$3,000,000. Of this export of specie, only \$4,342,535 were shipped to the United States in the year ending July, 1858.

The population of Mexico is about 8,000,000 ; her imports \$26,000,000 ; average per capita of consumption of foreign products, \$3 14, against a consumption by Cuba of \$27 29 ; South America, \$6 13 ; United States, \$9 26 ; Canada, \$19 16.

The Mexican Government has shown a strong desire to increase the extent of her relations with the United States, and proposed to pay \$120,000 per annum as a part subsidy to a mail line to be established, if the United States would join in fostering the enterprise.

The extent of the commercial relations of the United States with Mexico, may be seen from the following table :

# STATISTICAL VIEW OF THE COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES WITH MEXICO.

(From the *Treasury Reports on Commerce and Navigation.*)

| MEXICO.           | COMMERCE.         |                  |                |                | NAVIGATION.      |                   |                        |                   |                        |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
|                   | VALUE OF EXPORTS. |                  | TOTAL EXPORTS. | TOTAL IMPORTS. | TOTAL EXCHANGES. | AMERICAN TONNAGE. |                        | FOREIGN TONNAGE.  |                        |
|                   | Domestic Produce. | Foreign Produce. |                |                |                  | Entered the U. S. | Cleared from the U. S. | Entered the U. S. | Cleared from the U. S. |
| YEARS.            |                   |                  |                |                |                  |                   |                        |                   |                        |
| Ending 30th Sept. |                   |                  |                |                |                  |                   |                        |                   |                        |
| 1821.....         | 508,176           | 529,559          | 1,037,735      | 1,114,117      | 2,151,852        | 13,838            | 18,208                 | 603               | 282                    |
| 1825.....         | 951,040           | 5,519,104        | 6,470,144      | 4,044,647      | 10,514,791       | 24,824            | 20,487                 | 1,213             | 2,618                  |
| 1830.....         | 985,764           | 3,851,694        | 4,837,458      | 5,235,241      | 10,072,699       | 22,062            | 27,295                 | 4,862             | 3,551                  |
| 1835.....         | 3,016,612         | 6,012,609        | 9,029,221      | 9,490,446      | 18,519,667       | 39,756            | 44,453                 | 13,504            | 11,169                 |
| Ending 30th July. |                   |                  |                |                |                  |                   |                        |                   |                        |
| 1840.....         | 969,938           | 1,545,403        | 2,515,341      | 4,175,001      | 6,690,342        | 14,733            | 13,348                 | 3,709             | 3,025                  |
| 1845.....         | 784,154           | 368,177          | 1,152,331      | 1,702,936      | 2,855,267        | 16,157            | 16,952                 | 3,023             | 4,540                  |
| 1850.....         | 1,498,791         | 514,036          | 2,012,827      | 2,135,366      | 4,148,193        | 22,585            | 24,518                 | 36,039            | 30,104                 |
| 1855.....         | 2,253,368         | 669,436          | 2,922,804      | 2,882,830      | 5,805,634        | 39,817            | 41,458                 | 6,123             | 10,423                 |
| 1856.....         | 2,464,942         | 1,237,297        | 3,702,239      | 3,568,681      | 7,270,920        | 40,402            | 47,129                 | 8,387             | 7,106                  |
| 1857.....         | 3,017,640         | 597,566          | 3,615,206      | 5,985,857      | 10,601,063       | 27,291            | 35,508                 | 10,555            | 14,564                 |
| 1858.....         | 2,785,852         | 529,973          | 3,315,825      | 5,477,465      | 8,793,290        | 56,645            | 68,578                 | 7,439             | 14,213                 |
| 1859.....         | 2,307,170         | 685,376          | 2,992,546      | 5,339,974      | 8,322,520        | 73,029            | 88,723                 | 9,364             | 15,349                 |
| 1860.....         | 3,338,739         | 2,015,334        | 5,354,073      | 6,935,872      | 12,289,945       | 49,272            | 64,130                 | 12,748            | 18,190                 |
| 1861.....         | 1,564,062         | 651,828          | 2,215,890      | 3,689,213      | 5,905,103        | 27,241            | 31,716                 | 5,509             | 7,170                  |

## RESOURCES OF TAMAULIPAS, NUEVO LEON, AND COAHUILA.

The States of Tamaulipas on the coast, Nuevo Leon and Coahuila to the interior in the order named, all bounded on the north by the Rio Grande, compose the northeastern States of Mexico, and are those which depend wholly for their supplies from without on the importations of Matamoros and Brownsville.

TAMAULIPAS produces cotton rice, sugar-cane, corn, black beans, barley and tropical fruits in abundance. Horses, mules and cattle are raised in great numbers.

NUEVO LEON is a mountainous country abounding in mines of silver, iron, copper, and lead, capable of a great development with the aid of the new improved machinery and reduced price of quicksilver. The mines are essentially virgin, and have been little worked, owing to the difficulty hitherto experienced of transporting the product to the coast. Nitrate of potash and muriate of soda are also found in large quantities. The capital of the State is the ancient city of Monterey, with a population of 30,000 inhabitants. Stock is raised in abundance under the liberal rule of the present Governor. Eight or ten cotton factories have been established, which obtain their raw material from Texas, and numerous tanneries and other mechanical establishments are in successful operation.

COAHUILA is more mountainous and less flourishing than either of the preceding. Its population is sparse; the vine is cultivated to some extent, and with great success. Formerly the mines were extensively worked, and with large results, but the internal disturbances and Indian

raids have destroyed this industry. There are several cotton factories in this State, of which the principal is at Saltillo, the capital, a place of some 20,000 inhabitants. Parras, a town of 8,000 inhabitants, is famous for its wines.

Both of these States are under the government of VIDAURRE, an energetic and cultivated man, who is doing much for the prosperity of the country.

Further to the westward, adjoining Coahuila, is the State of CHIHUAHUA, rich in agriculture, in vineyards, in pasturage, and in mines—principally silver—of matchless richness. The coinage of the mint of Chihuahua, is \$1,000,000 annually, but this does not include one-third of the amount taken from the mines. Cotton is grown here also with great success, the climate being favorable and the temperature even.

The population of these States, by last authorities, was: Tamaulipas, 108,514; Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila, 212,450; Chihuahua, 160,000.

In addition to these States, those of Zacatecas, Durango, Aguas Calientas, and part of San Luis Potosi, all mining districts, and after the State of Mexico, containing the most thriving and active population in the Republic, have depended almost entirely upon the ports of Matamoros and Brownsville for their supplies, the roads from Tampico being unfit for wagon travel, and its only communication with a large part of these States being by pack mules through the mountain passes.



## THE MINES OF THE SIERRA MADRE.

It is to the mines of the States of Nuevo Leon, Coahuila and Chihuahua, that the attention turns with chief interest. The immense yield of gold since the discovery of the wealth of California and Australia greatly increases the importance of adding to the silver wealth of the world, so that the equilibrium of the precious metals may be preserved—and the continued drain of silver to the East, whither it annually pours in a continuous tide which has no reflux, has already begun to cause some anxiety among the more careful observers of the financial movements of the world.

The silver wealth of Mexico is unequalled. Humboldt estimated the yield of the mines prior to 1803 at \$1,767,-952,000. The coinage of the Mexican mint in thirty years reached \$453,665,367. The most brilliant of Mexican fortunes have been the reward of successful mining. Of the most noted instances are those of the FAJADO family, which in the short space of *five months*, from a front of 102 feet in the outcropping of a silver mine, made a net profit of four million dollars.

The Count of Regla, in twelve years, obtained a net profit of five millions; Zunega took from the mine of Santa Anna over four millions.

The Real del Monte mines, near the city of Mexico, commenced yielding in 1759, and up to 1781, had produced fifteen millions, and from that time to the revolution ten millions.

These are instances of the results of the most famous mines. The mines in the Sierra Madre, in the three States named, are as yet nearly virgin, and have never been worked with any regularity or system—the Indians having almost broken up the settlements outside of the large mines—but there is nothing in the configuration of the country which warrants the belief that they are any less rich than those of which these wondrous tales are told. Moreover, the yield has as yet been only partial, the old “patio” process not being adequate to the treatment of refractory ores. The application of the new processes has been found to increase the yield three to five fold.

The mines of the districts named are peculiarly well situated for early and cheap development—the country being well timbered, the soil capable of any production, and the climate healthy in an uncommon degree.

There are also valuable copper and lead mines in the vicinity of Monterey, as well as throughout this part of Mexico, and all of the product that has been brought to the New York market has been found to contain a large percentage of silver. As an evidence of the cheapness of labor it is stated that lead from Monterey was sold here in 1858 and 1859 at five and three-quarter cents per pound, and paid a fair profit to the miner, after the payment of all expenses, freight and commissions. When it is considered that this ore was transported hundreds of miles by ox-teams, and yet was profitably sold, some idea may be imagined of the wealth which this industry will yield when steam and railroads have

diminished the cost of transportation. Those who are aware of the extent of the private fortunes suddenly acquired by those interested in the Illinois lead mines will appreciate the importance of what may, after all, be considered as of merely secondary importance in the North-eastern States of Mexico.

#### MONTEREY THE CENTRE OF THE INTERIOR TRADE.

The thriving city of MONTEREY, the capital of Nuevo Leon, which lies at the foot of the Sierra Madre, about 240 miles west of MATAMOROS, is the natural point of distribution for Northern and Interior Mexico. Its population, not over 20,000 at the period of the Mexican war with the United States, has rapidly increased, until it counts now over 30,000 souls. Nearly all the trade of Northern Mexico which formerly passed by the plains, through Santa Fé, in long wagon trains, to CHIHUAHUA and DURANGO, now passes by MONTEREY, at an economy of, at least, one-half in actual expense, and of time in a much larger ratio.

The roads are open, throughout the year, from this point in all directions; while that from TAMPICO is almost closed during the rainy seasons, and mules are unable to pass the flood-bottoms, which cause, at times, long and serious detentions. There is no other mode of transportation from TAMPICO than by mules—there being no wagon train across the mountains, which lie between the coast and the interior. The change in the carrying trade, which has taken place since the war with the



United States, has contributed largely to develop MONTEREY as a central depot of merchandise. Before the war, all the trade was by mules. Now, instead of large "atajos" (caravans) of mules, the roads of the interior are traveled by wagons; and nearly all the muleteers have turned wagon-masters.

A railroad from Point Isabel to BROWNSVILLE, and from MATAMOROS, on the opposite bank, to MONTEREY, would turn the whole of the supply of this rich and fertile country into American hands. The road from MATAMOROS, for three-fourths of the distance, is almost level, and would require very little grading,—the approach to MONTEREY being the only section which would need any unusual outlay, and that only for a short distance. Labor was extremely cheap, before the French intervention in Mexican affairs, and, as the influence of this movement has not directly affected the interior provinces, is still very low. Before the war period, peon labor did not command above \$8 and \$10 per month. Timber is plenty; and all materials can be obtained in the country, except iron. Probably, in no part of the world could a road, of the same length, be as cheaply constructed. Once built, a large part of the transportation of the interior would pass over it; while the lead and copper mines, which, notwithstanding the great cost of cartage, are being worked with success, would provide a sufficient return freight.

The inhabitants of the States of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, are the most enterprising, industrious and patriotic citizens of the Republic, and, in their relations

with foreigners, have always displayed a liberal and cordial spirit. Especially is this true of them in their dealings with the Union citizens of Texas, who have fled across the border to find, on a foreign soil, escape from the tyranny and rapacity of their own countrymen. Many a refugee will testify to the kindnesses received from the hospitable "hacendados."

#### MEXICAN RAILROAD PROJECTS.

Under the liberal and enlightened rule of Governor VIDAURRI, there have been several efforts made to establish railroad communication with the Gulf. In 1857, a company was formed in Mexico, under the title of the "Monterey and Rio Grande Railroad Company," and in their name Senior *Estevan Zenteno* addressed Governor *Vidaurre* an inquiry as to the aid which might be expected from the Government of *Nuevo Leon*, to which the Governor made immediate reply. The correspondence was thus published in the *American Flag*, of Brownsville, of Sept. 16, 1857:

"OFFICE OF THE  
MONTEREY AND RIO GRANDE RAILROAD. }

"Excellent Sir,—The company which I have the honor  
"to represent, wishing to know all the difficulties which  
"may offer, that they may commence within the shortest  
"possible time, their work on the section of railroad  
"which, by authorization of the Supreme Government,  
"we have the privilege of constructing between the Rio  
"Grande or Bravo del Norte and Monterey, instruct me  
"to molest the attention of your Excellency, and beg of

“ you to inform us as to the nature of the aid from the  
 “ State of Nuevo Leon, upon which the company may  
 “ rely in her co-operation in the successful prosecution of  
 “ our enterprise.

“ Not doubting, excellent sir, the notorious favor  
 “ which you profess for the advance of improvement in  
 “ the whole country, we hope that to this, as the State  
 “ over which you preside will reap immense advantages,  
 “ you will extend all that protection and benevolence  
 “ for which you are characterized, and is so necessary for  
 “ the building of a railroad.

“ I take this occasion to assure your Excellency of my  
 “ respect and esteem.

“ God and Liberty, Mexico, July 17, 1857.

“ ESTEVAN ZENTENO.”

“ To the Most Excellent Governor and Commandant-Gen-  
 eral of Nuevo Leon and Coahuila, SANTIAGO VI-  
 DAURRI.

“ To ESTEVAN ZENTENO, Esq. :

“ In reply to your note of yesterday, asking the class  
 “ of auxiliaries which the States of Nuevo Leon and  
 “ Coahuila, could extend to the enterprise of a railroad  
 “ from the Rio Bravo to Monterey, I say that you may  
 “ count upon the contribution of laborers, provisions, the  
 “ necessary timber, and escorts for the protection of the  
 “ workmen, and in general all that may depend upon the  
 “ State, and is within its power to extend to the enterprise.

“ Persuaded that the realization of this project will be  
 “ a solid base for the development of commerce and in-

“dustury, is of the first steps necessary for the aggrandizement of the State, you need have no doubt that for my part, I will remove all difficulties that may be presented, and which are in my power to overcome.

“I assure you of the consideration of my esteem.

“God and Liberty, Mexico, 1857.

“SANTIAGO VIDAURRI.”

One-half, or perhaps a larger proportion of the funds necessary to build the road, could readily be obtained on the line of the road. The Texan Government, made grants of sections of land to all the railroad enterprises, and had made grants to the Point Isabel and Brownsville line, which was to be the American end of the Monterey and Gulf line. The grant of the Texas State Government to the Point Isabel and Brownsville road, was of sixteen sections, of 640 acres, or 10,240 acres per mile. Other railroads were projected in 1857. One from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, passing through Orizaba, Puebla, the rich plains of Apam, and from the City of Mexico to the Pacific by way of the cities of Queretaro, Guanajuato, the rich valley of the Bahio, the city of Guadalajara, to the Pacific Coast at San Blas or Mazatlan. A portion of this road has been completed from Vera Cruz to Soledad, on the road to Orizaba, and a short section a few miles from the City of Mexico, toward the plains of Apam. There is also completed a local road in the Valley of Mexico, from the city to the suburban village of Tacubaya, some three miles distant. The revolutions of the Church party, under

ZULOAGA and MIRAMON, against COMONFORT, in 1858, checked these enterprises, and foreign intervention since has prevented any further attention to this subject, except so far as the French have pushed the railroad from Vera Cruz for their own military purposes. A project was also undertaken for a road from New Camargo, on the San Juan River to Monterey. Camargo is on the river opposite to Rio Grande city. General Carvajal's organ, *El Pueblo*, announced in August, 1857, that subscriptions had been obtained to the amount of one million of dollars.

The Brownsville journal immediately urged the connection of Brownsville with Camargo, and closed an urgent appeal with the following passage: "What mind  
 " can comprehend the advantages of the position of  
 " Brownsville! With the only seaport for four hundred  
 " miles of coast, with an already populated country to  
 " supply, and with the hordes of emigrants that such a  
 " road would bring in, the property-holders, and every  
 " inhabitant of Northern Mexico, might safely date the  
 " beginning of an era of plenty, prosperity, happiness  
 " and riches, such as was never dreamed of by their most  
 " sanguine votaries. The people of those two States, or  
 " rather three, of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila, have the capital. It only requires the energy. Will  
 " they exert that energy? Time will show."



## TEXAS RAILROAD PROJECTS.

Besides the road from Point Isabel to Brownsville, which was interrupted by secession in 1861, there had been several projects to connect the Gulf with the interior of Mexico, among which were prominent a plan for a railroad from Aransas Pass, on the Gulf Coast, to Mazatlan, on the Pacific, a distance of 666 statute miles; a charter was obtained from the Juarez Government, but no steps seem to have been since taken, owing to the Mexican troubles, and the non-ratification by the United States of the Juarez Treaty.

## RESOURCES OF THE UNITED STATES BORDER OF THE RIO GRANDE.

There is no accurate estimate of the population of the Counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Zapata, Webb, Maverick, and Kinney, which in the order named skirt the northern bank of the river, and compose the United States portion of the Rio Grande Valley.\* The raids of Indians, and incursions of robber bands from Mexico, have rendered it too unsafe for a regular culture; but in

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\* The population of these counties was, by the last census, 1860; Cameron, 6,028; Hidalgo, 1,192; Starr, 2,406; Zapata, 1,248; Webb, 1,397; Maverick, 726; and Kinney, 61—in all 13,058—of which only 15 were slaves. Yet this could not then be considered as a fair estimate of the population. It is, of course, much smaller now than at any previous period since the Mexican war.

the future the natural advantages of this magnificent country are destined to add enormously to the wealth of the State of Texas, and to afford habitation to a large population. The climate is even, rarely presenting the extremes of cold or heat. The soil on the river banks is not surpassed in richness by that of the Banks of the Nile, and is of similar character; and cotton, corn, sugar-cane, and rice, are all produced with ease, and in bountiful profusion. As a grazing country for cattle and sheep, it can hardly be surpassed. The orange, fig, olive, and pomegranate, may be grown in the lower valley in abundance. The climate is of the most delightful character, and the atmosphere pure and delightful.

At the other extremity, near El Paso, the whole vast country bordering on the spurs and chains of the Sierra Madre is studded on every side with metallic ore, valuable beyond the calculation of man, and the possession of which may well excite the cupidity of dynasties, decide the destiny of nations, and change the political aspect of the world.

#### THE RIO GRANDE—ITS TOWNS AND MILITARY POSTS.

The Rio Grande seems, says an old writer, to have been discovered at three different points by the Spaniards; and without knowing it to be the same stream, the discoverers gave it as many different names, which are used to this day. The discoverers of the river at Santa Fe, in the north of Mexico, called it the Rio del Norte; at the Presidio, on account of its great width, they called

it the Rio Grande ; and at Reynoso, where the Indians were fierce and warlike (*Indios Bravos*), it was denominated the Rio Bravo.

At the mouth of the river, the Boca del Rio, is Bagdad, formerly an insignificant place of less than 100 inhabitants, but which the contraband cotton trade has since increased to a considerable number of frame shanties, and a population of nearly 2,000 persons. With the occupation of the frontier, this village will soon resume its former insignificance.

Ascending the river, the first places of importance—and of paramount importance, as commanding the commerce of the great river—are Brownsville, on the United States shore, a town of about 4,000, and Matamoros, on the Mexican shore, an older city, of about 8,000 inhabitants. Of these two rivals, which face each other at a distance not exceeding two miles, Brownsville is by far the most eligible in point of situation. Built upon a bank, high at the lowest stages of water, and always above overflow, the town overlooks Matamoros, which is about one and a half miles back from the river on the opposite bank at low water, but, when the river rises, is almost washed by the overflow. To this superiority is owing the great importance of Brownsville as a military post. Below, the river bends to the south. Upon this bend, equally commanding Brownsville at its feet, Matamoros to the south, and Fort Paredes, a Mexican post, stands Fort Brown, famous in history as the scene of the gallant and protracted defence of Major Brown, until relieved by Gen. Taylor, early in the Mexican war.



RINGOLD BARRACKS is the first military station above Fort Brown, distant by land about 100 miles, and by water 200 miles from the mouth of the river. Near it is the town of Rio Grande City, one mile above, on the Texas side. Opposite, on the San Juan River, near where it flows into the Rio Grande, is Camargo, a Mexican town of about 2,000 inhabitants. Above, on the Texas side, is Roma, a small but enterprising place of 500 inhabitants. This is the nominal head of steamboat navigation, and about 330 miles from the mouth of the river. Ascending, we find on the Mexican side, Mier, two miles from the Rio Grande bank on the river Alcantro, with a population of 2,000. Guerrero, six miles from the river, on the Salado, with a population of 4,000. During the United States occupation of Ringold barracks supplies were always brought from Fort Brown by steamboat.

FORT MCINTOSH, near the town of Laredo, is the next military post, and distant from Ringold Barracks about 120 miles by land, and 216 by water.

FORT DUNCAN, near Eagle Pass, is the next military post. It is distant about 100 miles by land, and 234 by water, above Fort McIntosh. The only town of consequence between the two posts is Presidio, distant six miles from the Rio Grande, and thirty miles from Fort Duncan. Its population is about 2,000. It was at this point that Gen. Wool's column crossed the river in 1846. About twelve miles above Fort Duncan there is an extensive mine of bituminous coal.

These last posts—Forts McIntosh and Duncan—were supplied by keel boats and a mule train.

Beyond Eagle Pass there are no settlements, either Mexican or American, the Indians being too numerous for safety.

The next military post is at El Paso del Norte, in the beautiful and fruitful valley of that name, at the Falls of the Rio Grande.

Such are the military posts on the river. Two of them—Forts Brown and Duncan—were styled by the Adjutant-General of the United States Army, in his report to Mr. Crawford, Secretary of War in 1849, "*The Keys to the Upper Provinces of Mexico.*"

The Rio Grande averages in width about 400 feet. The nominal head of navigation, as we have stated, is Roma, but at all seasons boats drawing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet may go as high as Guerrero, 103 miles from Ringold Barracks. During five months of the year, from June to November, when the river is high, vessels of this draught can go to Kingsbury Falls, 169 miles above Fort McIntosh (Laredo), and 11 miles below Presidio, and a lighter class of vessels could navigate at all seasons.

It is considered that a moderate expenditure would make the river navigable from the mouth to a considerable distance above, as well as below Laredo; for the obstructions, though numerous, are not of a serious character—the bed of the Kingsbury Falls, which is a slight descent of about four feet in a length of two hundred feet, being of soft limestone, easily broken by the pickax. The river can probably be made navigable

to El Paso, 1,400 miles from the mouth; thus bringing within easy reach of commerce the extensive valley of this name, with its boundless products and unexampled fertility.

#### DUTY OF THE GOVERNMENT.

Toward this rich country the eyes of France are turned in eagerness, and in Mexico she would fain seek a counterpoise for the gold mines of Australia, which pour their wealth into the lap of England, and the auriferous fields of California, the modern Ophir, which pays her shining tribute to the industry of the United States. Every advantage is upon our side; the prize is within our reach, and no power on earth can take it from us, if we be true to ourselves. The development of this magnificent country would afford ample occupation for all our national enterprise, and every effort would add not only to our wealth and prosperity, but would aid to bind to us more closely those distant States, and bring us nearer to our brethren who are working eastward from the shores of the Pacific.

Let the Government direct that the ports on the line of the Rio Grande be garrisoned and firmly held—occupy in force the coast line—render Point Isabel and Brownsville impregnable—the former with a casemated work—and then open the trade with Mexico to all, without restrictions of any kind. A line of steamers could at once be established between New York, New Orleans and Point Isabel, and subsidized by Congress. The rea-

sons which operate against a liberal opening of the recovered rebel ports, will not hold good in the case of Brownsville, for the reason that the abnormal and strange trade in cotton at Matamoros will wholly cease, and no surveillance even will be necessary to prevent goods going northward to the Confederacy after the cotton teams have stopped their trips, for the reason that there would be no mode of transportation. Brownsville would again become the depot for Mexican and not Texan supply. The Northeastern States of Mexico should be encouraged to stand true and firm in their resistance to French invasion, and in a few months, a commerce, beyond any which we have yet dreamed of, would be organized with Mexico, to the mutual advantage of both countries.

The Central and Southern States of Mexico, encouraged by our sympathy, would put forth new efforts, and inspired by the noble example of the patriots of the Rio Grande districts, would throw off the yoke of the invaders and reassert their ancient liberties.

With the rebellion vanquished, the Union re-established, never again to be assailed, and Mexico once more a free and vigorous Republic, what power or combination of powers would dare to stop the western course of Empire, or seek to plant on our young and virgin soil, the impress of their false government and effete civilization.

Then would the vision of Canning be realized of a "new world called into being to redress the balance of the old," but in a broader sense than he dreamed of;

not simply as a redress of the balance of conflicting European interests, but as a world's counterpoise to her malign and warlike policy. The interest of friendly and united republican America, would be the common interest of mankind, the interest of humanity, of civilization, and of peace.













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